THE TWO FACES OF HAM

How One Biblical Figure Justified Both Slavery and Supremacy

Scripture as Elite Infrastructure: A Case Study in Adaptive Power

---

Thomas J. Bryan
Claude/Anthropic
February 2026

"Like a chameleon, the term Hamite changes its colour to reflect the changing light."
— Edith Sanders, "The Hamitic Hypothesis" (1969)

I. Introduction: The Same Verse, Opposite Purposes

In the ninth chapter of Genesis, Noah lies drunk and naked in his tent. His son Ham sees him; his brothers Shem and Japheth cover him without looking. When Noah awakens, he curses not Ham but Ham's son Canaan: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers." The passage occupies five verses. It mentions no skin colour, specifies no continent, and names no race. It is, by any measure, a brief and ambiguous episode in a much larger narrative.

Yet this passage became, in David Goldenberg's assessment, the "single greatest justification for Black slavery for more than a thousand years." For five centuries, preachers, slaveholders, and colonial administrators cited the "Curse of Ham" to argue that Africans were divinely condemned to perpetual servitude. The passage pushed an entire people down—into chains, plantations, and legal sub-humanity.

Then, in the Great Lakes region of Africa in the late nineteenth century, the same biblical figure was used to push a different group up. European colonizers, drawing on an anthropological construct called the Hamitic Hypothesis, declared that the Tutsi of Rwanda were descendants of Ham's line—but not the cursed branch. They were Hamites: a superior, quasi-Caucasoid race that had migrated from the Nile Valley to bring civilization to the darker, more "primitive" peoples of central Africa. Where the Curse of Ham made Africans into slaves, the Hamitic Hypothesis made the Tutsi into a master race.

Same scripture. Same figure. Opposite deployments. In one instance, descent from Ham condemns a people to the lowest rung of human hierarchy. In the other, it elevates a people to the highest. The contradiction is not a failure of logic—it is a demonstration of function. The text was never the point. The power arrangement was always the point. Scripture, in the hands of those who wield it, operates not as fixed doctrine but as adaptive infrastructure: raw material that elites reshape to fit whatever hierarchy they need to justify at the moment.

This paper traces both deployments in detail. It begins with the biblical text itself and its position within the Table of Nations. It then examines the long construction of the Curse

of Ham as a justification for African slavery, from early rabbinic and patristic commentary through the transatlantic slave trade and the antebellum American South. It next follows the transformation of Ham from cursed ancestor into civilizing patriarch via the Hamitic Hypothesis, and the catastrophic application of that hypothesis in colonial Rwanda. It documents the inversion of the inversion—how Hutu nationalists weaponized the same Hamitic framework to recast the Tutsi as foreign invaders who must be expelled or exterminated. And it concludes by situating both deployments within a broader framework: the use of inherited belief texts as instruments of elite power, adaptable to any circumstance, durable across centuries, and lethal when activated.

The argument is not that scripture causes slavery or genocide. The argument is that scripture, like any powerful institutional resource, does what its wielders require of it. The same five verses of Genesis 9 became both the chain and the crown—depending entirely on who held them and what they needed.

II. The Text: Genesis 9–10 and the Table of Nations

The episode that launched a millennium of exploitation is remarkably brief. Genesis 9:20–27 records that Noah, having survived the Flood, planted a vineyard, drank its wine, became drunk, and lay uncovered in his tent. Ham, identified as "the father of Canaan," saw his father's nakedness and told his two brothers outside. Shem and Japheth took a garment, walked backward into the tent, and covered Noah without looking. When Noah awoke and learned what Ham had done, he pronounced a curse—not upon Ham, but upon Ham's son Canaan: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers." He then blessed Shem and Japheth.

Scholars have long debated the nature of Ham's offense. The text says only that he "saw the nakedness of his father," but the severity of Noah's response has led commentators to propose voyeurism, castration, or paternal incest as possible readings. The displacement of the curse from Ham to Canaan has generated equal puzzlement. Most contemporary scholars read the passage as an etiology—a story composed or redacted to justify the later Israelite subjugation of the Canaanites, placed in Noah's mouth to give it the authority of ancient prophecy. The passage served its original authors as a legitimation device: we may enslave the Canaanites because their ancestor was cursed by Noah.

Genesis 10, the Table of Nations, extends this genealogical architecture across the known world. Noah's three sons become the progenitors of seventy nations. The principle of organization is roughly geographical: Japheth's descendants spread into Anatolia and the Mediterranean; Shem's into Mesopotamia and Arabia; Ham's into Africa and parts of the Near East. Ham's sons are named: Cush (identified with Ethiopia and Nubia), Mizraim (Egypt), Put (Libya), and Canaan. Thus the Table places the great civilizations of northeast Africa—Egypt above all—squarely within Ham's lineage.

Two features of this arrangement would prove fateful. First, the association of Ham with Africa created a genealogical link that later interpreters would exploit, extending the curse on Canaan to all of Ham's African descendants—a move the text does not make but does not explicitly prevent. Second, the inclusion of Egypt among Ham's offspring created an ambiguity: Ham's line produced both the cursed Canaanites and the

sophisticated Egyptians. This ambiguity became the hinge on which the entire Hamitic apparatus would turn. Was Ham's lineage degraded or distinguished? The text allowed either reading. The answer depended entirely on which reading served the reader's interests.

III. Deployment One: The Curse of Ham and the Justification of Slavery

The Construction of Blackness

The biblical text of Genesis 9 never mentions skin colour. Ham's name bears no etymological connection to darkness; the folk etymology linking it to a Hebrew root meaning "hot" or "dark" is, as Goldenberg has demonstrated, linguistically unfounded. Yet by the early medieval period, a tradition had developed—in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic commentary—associating Ham with blackness. The Babylonian Talmud preserves a legend that Ham violated a prohibition on sexual intercourse aboard the ark and was "smitten in his skin" as punishment. Early Christian writers like Origen began linking darkness and slavery more explicitly. The fourth-century Syriac text the Cave of Treasures introduced the claim that Canaan was the ancestor of dark-skinned peoples.

These were scattered traditions, not systematic doctrine. The decisive transformation came with the transatlantic slave trade. As European powers built an economy dependent on African labour, the scattered traditions coalesced into a theological apparatus. The logic ran as follows: Ham was the ancestor of African peoples (via Genesis 10). Noah cursed Ham's lineage to perpetual servitude. Therefore African slavery was divinely ordained—not merely permitted but commanded by sacred history. The fact that the curse in Genesis falls on Canaan rather than Ham, and that the text never mentions Africa, skin colour, or racial categories, was not an obstacle. As Edith Sanders observed, the term Hamite functioned like a chameleon, changing its colour to suit the ideological moment.

The American Theatre

The Curse of Ham reached its fullest elaboration in the antebellum American South. Pro-slavery preachers found in Genesis 9 a text that sanctified an economic system. Baptist pastor Iveson Brookes declared that "Negro Slavery is an institution of heaven and intended for the mutual benefit of master and slave, as proved by the Bible." Patrick Mell, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, taught that the descendants of Ham constituted the African or Negro race. Bishop Augustus Marie Martin of Louisiana

proclaimed in 1861 that slavery was the “manifest will of God” and that Catholics must save “thousands of children of the race of Canaan” from barbarism.

The deployment was not accidental. Slavery produced enormous wealth, and that wealth required moral insulation. The slaveholder needed to believe—or at least to claim—that his enterprise was righteous. The Curse of Ham provided what no economic argument could: divine authorization. It transformed a commercial arrangement into a cosmic dispensation. It made the slave not merely a labourer but a figure fulfilling biblical prophecy. And it made the slaveholder not merely an employer but an agent of God’s plan.

Frederick Douglass saw the mechanism clearly. In his 1852 speech, he condemned a church that had “made itself the bulwark of American slavery and the shield of American slave-hunters,” that had “taught that man may, properly, be a slave; that the relation of master and slave is ordained of God.” Douglass understood that the theological claim was not peripheral to the institution—it was load-bearing. Remove the divine sanction, and slavery stood exposed as naked exploitation. The Curse of Ham was the keystone.

This first deployment of Ham’s lineage thus functioned as what we might call a descent mechanism: it pushed a population downward in a racial hierarchy by associating them with a divinely cursed ancestor. The scripture was the instrument; the function was subordination; the beneficiary was the slaveholding elite.

IV. Deployment Two: The Hamitic Hypothesis and the Elevation of the Tutsi

From Curse to Civilization

While the Curse of Ham was being preached from Southern pulpits, a parallel and contradictory tradition was developing in European anthropology. The same Genesis genealogy that placed cursed Canaan among Ham's offspring also placed Egypt there. And Egypt was a problem for the racial theories of the nineteenth century. European scholars could not deny that Egyptian civilization was ancient, sophisticated, and architecturally staggering. But their racial framework demanded that all significant civilizational achievement originate from Caucasoid peoples. The solution was ingenious: detach Ham from the curse and reclassify his descendants as a branch of the Caucasian race.

The Hamitic Hypothesis took shape gradually. John Hanning Speke, exploring the sources of the Nile in the 1860s, proposed that the pastoral ruling classes of the Great Lakes region were not truly African but descended from a superior northern race related to the Ethiopians and, through them, to the biblical Hamites. Giuseppe Sergi, writing at the turn of the century, classified the Mediterranean peoples—including North Africans—as the "greatest race in the world." The hypothesis reached its fullest expression in C. G. Seligman's influential book The Races of Africa, published in 1930 and reprinted into the 1960s.

Seligman's formulation was categorical. He asserted that the civilizations of Africa were the civilizations of the Hamites, that their history was the record of Hamitic interaction with "the Negro and the Bushmen," and that the incoming Hamites were pastoral Caucasians, arriving in successive waves, who were better armed and more intellectually capable than the indigenous agricultural populations. In Seligman's framework, nothing of civilizational value in sub-Saharan Africa could be attributed to African peoples themselves. Every significant development—metalworking, irrigation, complex political organization—was the work of Hamitic immigrants from the north.

Notice what has happened. The same genealogical line—Ham's descendants—that was used to condemn Africans to slavery is now being used to explain away African

achievement. In the first deployment, being descended from Ham meant you were cursed and fit only for servitude. In the second, being descended from Ham meant you were quasi-European and responsible for all that was admirable in Africa. The contradiction is complete. And it is entirely functional: both readings served European supremacy. The Curse of Ham justified enslaving Africans. The Hamitic Hypothesis justified denying Africans credit for their own civilizations.

Application in Rwanda

The Hamitic Hypothesis found its most devastating laboratory in colonial Rwanda. When European explorers and administrators encountered Rwandan society in the late nineteenth century, they observed a stratified polity in which a minority group, the Tutsi, held most positions of political authority and controlled cattle (the primary form of wealth), while the majority Hutu population engaged primarily in agriculture. A small Twa population occupied the margins.

These were not, in pre-colonial Rwanda, rigid ethnic categories. The terms Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa described primarily social and economic positions. A Hutu who accumulated cattle and gained favour at court could become Tutsi; a Tutsi who lost wealth could be reclassified as Hutu. The groups shared a common language (Kinyarwanda), common religious practices, and a long history of intermarriage. The boundaries were fluid, permeable, and based more on occupation and status than on any concept of biological race.

European colonizers interpreted this society through the lens of the Hamitic Hypothesis and transformed it accordingly. The German colonial administration, arriving in the 1890s, identified the Tutsi as the natural aristocratic class—taller, with narrower features—and concluded that they must be Hamites: a Caucasoid race that had migrated from the Nile Valley and established dominance over the indigenous “Negroid” Hutu. Speke had proposed precisely this decades earlier. The Belgian administration, taking over after World War I, intensified the racial engineering. Belgian scientists measured skulls, noses, and heights. They developed pseudo-scientific profiles of the two groups. They declared the Tutsi to be a fundamentally different and superior race.

In 1933, the Belgian administration institutionalized these racial categories by issuing ethnic identity cards to every Rwandan. Each person was classified as Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. The classification was often arbitrary—in ambiguous cases, ownership of ten or more cattle made one Tutsi—but once assigned, it was permanent, hereditary, and printed on a card that one was required to carry. The fluid social categories of pre-colonial Rwanda were frozen into rigid biological races by administrative fiat. A bureaucratic act, justified by a biblical genealogy filtered through nineteenth-century racial science, created the categories that would, sixty years later, determine who lived and who died.

The Belgians then used these manufactured racial categories to govern. They dismantled Hutu chieftaincies. They reserved administrative positions, educational access, and political power for the Tutsi. They restructured the traditional patron-client system to favour Tutsi at every level. The Tutsi elite, for their part, largely accepted the Hamitic narrative because it validated their political dominance. They were not merely powerful; they were racially destined to rule. The Catholic Church, deeply embedded in colonial administration, taught the Hamitic Hypothesis in mission schools, giving it religious as well as scientific authority.

This second deployment of Ham's lineage functioned as an elevation mechanism: it pushed a population upward in a racial hierarchy by associating them with a civilizing Hamitic ancestor. The scripture was the same; the genealogy was the same; the function was reversed. Where the Curse of Ham degraded, the Hamitic Hypothesis ennobled. The beneficiary, in both cases, was the European imperial project—in one instance extracting African labour through slavery, in the other extracting African resources through colonial rule administered by a Hamitic proxy elite.

V. The Inversion of the Inversion: From Superior Race to Foreign Interloper

The Hamitic Hypothesis contained within itself the seed of its own weaponization. If the Tutsi were not truly African—if they were Hamitic immigrants from the north, a different race from the indigenous Hutu—then they were also, by definition, foreigners. The image of the Hamite as "superior civilizer" could be switched, with minimal logical adjustment, to "foreign interloper."

This switch occurred in the 1950s, as decolonization movements swept across Africa and the Belgians, sensing the direction of history, began transferring their support from the Tutsi minority to the Hutu majority. In 1957, Hutu intellectuals published the Bahutu Manifesto, a founding document of Hutu political consciousness. Crucially, the Manifesto did not reject the colonial racial categories. It accepted them completely. It argued that Rwanda was a nation dominated by a "Hamitic" minority over a "Bantu" majority, and framed the political struggle as one of majority rule against a foreign oligarchy. The authors explicitly demanded that ethnic classifications be retained on identity cards—the same cards the Belgians had introduced in 1933—to monitor the "racial monopoly" of the Tutsi.

The Hamitic Hypothesis had thus been turned inside out. Under colonial rule, it had justified Tutsi supremacy: they were Hamites, therefore superior, therefore entitled to rule. Under the Hutu Republic, it justified Tutsi persecution: they were Hamites, therefore foreign, therefore illegitimate occupiers of a land that belonged to the true indigenous people. Mahmood Mamdani has argued persuasively that the 1994 genocide can be understood as a form of settler-colonial violence, with the Tutsi cast as proxy colonists. The Hamitic Hypothesis, originally imported to serve European interests, was appropriated by Hutu nationalists as the ideological foundation for extermination.

Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines, the hate radio station that coordinated the genocide, broadcast propaganda explicitly grounded in the Hamitic framework. The Tutsi were invaders. They had stolen the country. They were not Rwandans. The language of racial science that had been used to elevate the Tutsi was now used to dehumanize them. The identity cards that had been introduced to classify the

population in 1933 became, at roadblocks in 1994, instruments of selection: Tutsi on the card meant death.

In one hundred days, approximately 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed. The ideological infrastructure that made this possible—the rigid ethnic categories, the identity cards, the narrative of foreign invasion—traced directly back to a colonial racial theory that was itself derived from a biblical genealogy. The line of transmission ran from Genesis 9 through nineteenth-century anthropology through Belgian colonial administration through Hutu nationalist ideology to the machetes at the roadblocks. At no point in this chain was the scripture the cause. At every point, it was the instrument.

VI. The Old Testament as Elite Infrastructure

The dual deployment of Ham illuminates a broader pattern in the history of belief and power. The Old Testament, whatever its origins in the religious experience of ancient Israel, became upon its incorporation into Christianity an extraordinarily versatile instrument of elite legitimation. This versatility stems from specific structural features of the text.

First, the Old Testament contains an extensive body of law, genealogy, and prophecy that presupposes and naturalizes hierarchical authority. Kings are divinely anointed. Peoples are divinely chosen or divinely cursed. Lands are divinely promised. Wealth is a sign of divine favour. Disobedience to authority is rebellion against God. These are precisely the claims that secular elites need but cannot generate from secular sources alone. A king who rules by military conquest rules until a stronger army arrives. A king who rules by divine right rules with the authority of the cosmos.

Second, the Old Testament arrived in European Christianity as part of a package. When Constantine appropriated Christianity as the organizing ideology of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, he inherited not just the teachings of Jesus but the entire Hebrew Bible. This created a paradox that would shape Western civilization for seventeen centuries. The New Testament, centred on Jesus of Nazareth, is predominantly a text of social critique. Jesus challenges wealth, confronts religious hypocrisy, elevates the poor, and warns the powerful. The Sermon on the Mount is not a comfortable text for emperors. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus does not flatter aristocrats.

The Old Testament, however, offered imperial Christianity exactly what the New Testament withheld: a divine-right framework for absolute authority. David was anointed by God. Solomon's wealth was a sign of divine blessing. The covenant with Abraham established a chosen people with special privileges. Enemies of Israel were enemies of God. For rulers seeking theological justification for their own power—from Constantine through the medieval divine-right monarchs to the colonial administrators of the nineteenth century—the Old Testament was an inexhaustible quarry.

Peter the Great of Russia provides a striking illustration. In 1718, faced with a son—the Tsarevich Alexei—who resisted his reforms and represented a conservative faction that threatened to undo his life's work, Peter had Alexei imprisoned, interrogated under torture, and condemned to death. Peter regarded his son, as his own contemporaries noted, as the rebellious Absalom—the son of King David who raised an army against his father and was killed for it (2 Samuel 13–19). The biblical parallel was not incidental; it was structural. Peter reached into the Old Testament for a narrative that authorized a father-king to destroy a son-rebel. The New Testament, with its emphasis on forgiveness, mercy, and turning the other cheek, offered no such authorization. The Old Testament did.

This pattern—elites drawing preferentially on the Old Testament for legitimation while leaving the more inconvenient teachings of Jesus in the background—recurs throughout the history of Christendom. The divine right of kings, the theological justification of feudalism, the sanctification of wealth, the authorization of holy war, the legitimation of slavery: all drew primarily on Old Testament sources. The New Testament served for pastoral care, personal piety, and occasional inspiration. The Old Testament served for power.

VII. Belief as Adaptive Infrastructure: A Theoretical Framework

The case of Ham reveals something fundamental about the relationship between sacred texts and political power. Belief systems do not function as fixed programs that produce predictable outputs. They function as infrastructure—flexible, adaptive, available for appropriation by whoever holds the institutional machinery to interpret and deploy them.

The same passage of Genesis 9–10 has been deployed to accomplish at least four distinct and mutually contradictory political purposes. First, the original authors or redactors used it to justify the Israelite subjugation of the Canaanites: Noah's curse authorized the conquest of Canaan. Second, medieval and early modern interpreters expanded the curse to justify the enslavement of all African peoples: Ham's lineage was black and therefore destined for servitude. Third, nineteenth- and twentieth-century anthropologists reversed the valence entirely, using Ham's lineage to elevate certain African populations as quasi-European civilizers: the Hamitic Hypothesis. Fourth, post-colonial African nationalists inverted the inversion, using the same Hamitic framework to delegitimize the very populations it had previously elevated: the Tutsi as foreign invaders.

Four deployments. Four contradictory purposes. One text. The text does not change. The power arrangements change, and the interpretation changes with them.

This adaptability is not a weakness of belief systems; it is their most important structural feature. A rigid ideology—one that can serve only one purpose—is brittle. It breaks when circumstances shift. A belief system that can be reinterpreted to serve new masters, new arrangements, and new power configurations is durable precisely because it is flexible. The ambiguity that biblical scholars find puzzling in Genesis 9—why is Canaan cursed rather than Ham? Why is the offense so vaguely described? Why is Ham's lineage placed in both Africa and Egypt?—is not a textual flaw. It is the feature that makes the passage useful across radically different contexts. The gaps, silences, and contradictions in sacred texts are not bugs; they are the joints that allow the text to bend.

Elites throughout history have understood this intuitively. They do not typically invent new belief systems from scratch—a costly and uncertain enterprise. They inherit existing texts, traditions, and institutional frameworks, and they adapt them. Constantine did not write a new scripture; he appropriated an existing one and restructured the Roman state around it. The Belgian colonial administrators did not invent the Hamitic Hypothesis from nothing; they extracted it from a biblical genealogy and grafted it onto nineteenth-century racial science. The Hutu nationalists of 1957 did not reject the colonial racial framework; they accepted it wholesale and reversed its moral polarity.

The pattern is consistent: inherit the text, adapt the interpretation, deploy the adapted version through whatever institutional channels are available—pulpits, schools, colonial administrations, radio stations, identity cards. The text provides legitimacy. The institution provides distribution. The elite provides direction. The population, embedded in the belief system from birth, receives the adapted interpretation as truth.

VIII. Conclusion: The Instrument and the Hand

Ham, the son of Noah, never existed as a historical person. He is a character in a narrative composed or compiled by scribes in the ancient Near East, probably during the first millennium BCE. He did not see his father naked. He was not cursed. He had no descendants who populated Africa, founded Egypt, or migrated to the Great Lakes region. The Table of Nations in Genesis 10 is not a genetic map but a literary and political document that organized the ancient Israelite understanding of their world.

And yet this fictional character shaped the lives of hundreds of millions of real people. His name was invoked to justify the transatlantic slave trade. His genealogy was restructured to legitimize European colonial rule in Africa. His supposed descendants were classified on identity cards, elevated into a proxy ruling class, and then—when the political winds shifted—reclassified as foreign invaders and targeted for extermination. Eight hundred thousand people died in one hundred days, at the end of a chain of interpretation that began with five ambiguous verses in a Bronze Age text.

The lesson is not that scripture is dangerous. The lesson is that any text invested with sacred authority becomes a tool of extraordinary power—power that flows not from the text itself but from the institutional apparatus that deploys it. The Curse of Ham did not enslave anyone. Slaveholders enslaved people and used the Curse of Ham to quiet their consciences and silence their critics. The Hamitic Hypothesis did not create ethnic categories in Rwanda. Colonial administrators created ethnic categories and used the Hamitic Hypothesis to naturalize them as biological fact.

In every case, the hand precedes the instrument. The elite identifies its interest—subjugation, extraction, division, control—and then searches the available textual tradition for a passage that can be made to authorize that interest. The search almost always succeeds, because sacred texts, composed across centuries by multiple authors for multiple purposes, contain enough ambiguity to support almost any reading. The genius of the enterprise lies not in the text but in the selection, emphasis, and institutional dissemination of the chosen interpretation.

Understanding this mechanism is essential for anyone seeking to comprehend how belief systems operate in the service of power. The figure of Ham stands as a uniquely clarifying case—a single biblical character used within a single century to both enslave and ennoble, to degrade and to elevate, to condemn and to crown. The two faces of Ham are, in the end, not the faces of Ham at all. They are the faces of the elites who held him up to the light and turned him, like a prism, until the beam fell where they needed it to fall.

Bibliography

Biblical Text and Commentary

Genesis 9:20–27; 10:1–32. Hebrew Bible.

Goldenberg, David M. The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Haynes, Stephen R. Noah's Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Sarna, Nahum M. Understanding Genesis. New York: Schocken Books, 1966.

Whitford, David M. The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009.

The Hamitic Hypothesis

Sanders, Edith R. "The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origin and Functions in Time Perspective." Journal of African History 10, no. 4 (1969): 521–532.

Seligman, C. G. Races of Africa. London: Oxford University Press, 1930; 4th ed., 1966.

Speke, John Hanning. Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile. Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1863.

Ehret, Christopher. "The Hamitic Hypothesis." In Ethiopians and East Africans. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1974.

Sergi, Giuseppe. Africa: Antropologia della Stirpe Camitica. Turin, 1897.

Rwanda: Colonial Rule and Genocide

Mamdani, Mahmood. When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Prunier, Gérard. The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995; rev. ed., 2010.

Eltringham, Nigel. "Invaders Who Have Stolen the Country: The Hamitic Hypothesis, Race and the Rwandan Genocide." Social Identities 12, no. 4 (2006): 425–446.

Zadi, Awa Princess E. "The Hamite Must Die! The Legacy of Colonial Ideology in Rwanda." Master's thesis, CUNY Graduate Center, 2021.

Des Forges, Alison. "Leave None to Tell the Story": Genocide in Rwanda. New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999.

Fussell, Jim. "Group Classification on National ID Cards as a Factor in Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing." Presented to the Yale University Genocide Studies Program, 2001.

Katongole, Emmanuel, and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove. Mirror to the Church: Resurrecting Faith after Genocide in Rwanda. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

Slavery and the Bible

Douglass, Frederick. “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” Speech, Rochester, New York, July 5, 1852.

Peterson, Thomas Virgil. Ham and Japheth: The Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South. Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1978.

Powery, Emerson B., and Rodney S. Sadler Jr. The Genesis of Liberation: Biblical Interpretation in the Antebellum Narratives of the Enslaved. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016.

Johnson, Sylvester A. The Myth of Ham in Nineteenth-Century American Christianity. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

Elite Power and Belief Systems

Mann, Michael. The Sources of Social Power. Vol. 1, A History of Power from the Beginning to AD 1760. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Scott, James C. Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Said, Edward W. Orientalism. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

Arendt, Hannah. The Origins of Totalitarianism. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951; rev. ed., 1968.

Comparative Cases

Massie, Robert K. Peter the Great: His Life and World. New York: Knopf, 1980.

Bushkovitch, Paul. Peter the Great: The Struggle for Power, 1671–1725. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Du Bois, W. E. B. The World and Africa. New York: Viking Press, 1947.

Rekdal, Ole Bjorn. “When Hypothesis Becomes Myth: The Iraqi Origin of the Iraqw.” Ethnology 37, no. 1 (1998): 17–32.

*****Copyright and Licensing*****

© 2026 Thomas J. Bryan

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.
To view a copy of this license, visit: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/

*****You are free to:*****

- Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format
- Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material

Under the following terms:
- Attribution — You must give appropriate credit
- NonCommercial — You may not use the material for commercial purposes

*This case study is part of the collection *Patterns of Power: Systematic Analysis of Elite Control Mechanisms Across Civilizations**